

# Ventura County Star

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## Small changes could improve life, plan says

### Regional agency urges denser housing

By Zeke Barlow, [zbarlow@ VenturaCountyStar.com](mailto:zbarlow@VenturaCountyStar.com)

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By changing housing and business trends on just 2 percent of Southern California land, gridlock and pollution could decrease while affordable housing and jobs would increase, making the region more livable for a swelling population.

That was the hopeful claim made Tuesday as the Southern California Association of Governments unveiled Compass Vision, a plan that was touted as a completely new way of looking at growth and sustainability as the six-county region grows by an expected 6.3 million residents by 2030.

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"We needed to do something very different," SCAG executive director Mark Pisano said at a Los Angeles news conference Tuesday. "We have built a concrete vision, and we have built it not in our offices but by pulling together a collective vision formed by the community."

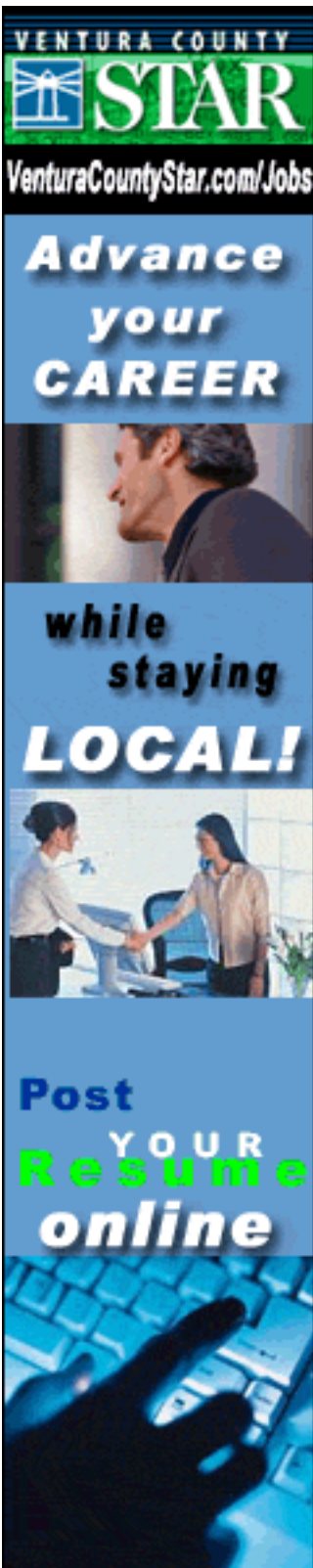
The plan for the region -- the counties of Ventura, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino and Imperial -- looks at transportation and land use as interconnected and says they need to be considered together when decisions are made. The final product looks at how public and private entities can work together to make the region more livable, healthy and prosperous. It is expected to take six years to implement.

#### Home near transportation

The heart of the plan revolves around changing the use of 2 percent of the land to dense mixed-use housing and business areas located close to transportation hubs.

Much of that land is run-down city centers and industrial corridors where housing and apartments would be mixed, creating attractive, affordable living areas that increase pedestrian traffic and public transportation, thereby decreasing pollution.

That 2 percent land area would have a ripple effect on the economy, housing, pollution and transportation to the remaining 98 percent,



planners hope.

Toni Young, Port Hueneme mayor and a SCAG vice president, said some places in Ventura County would see more changes than others.

The plan calls for places such as Simi Valley, Moorpark and Camarillo to have more dense development closer to transportation hubs such as the Metrolink stop in Camarillo.

She said it would not affect existing neighborhoods.

Remote places like Ojai wouldn't be touched by the plan as much as cities like Ventura, which already refocused its planning to encourage dense development.

Young recognized it may be a tough sell in places such as Thousand Oaks, where any new development is met with resistance.

"It's a sexy presentation," she said of the slickly produced presentation, which includes time-lapse videos of how downtowns are transformed into vibrant city centers. She said once citizens learn of the benefits, they will encourage their city councils to support it.

### **'It's a tall order' to change**

Ventura City Councilman Carl Morehouse said that, while his council embraces the idea, not all may.

"It's a tall order" to change, he said. "But when you look at the attitude of some and do nothing and look at the outcome of what we had" something has to change, he said.

SCAG executive director Pisano said "this is not a change in the California lifestyle," but said that the feasibility of the plan is fueled by new housing preferences. Urban infill, building in existing city centers, is increasing, he said.

Pisano said studies show that there is nearly an equal number of residents who would prefer denser homes, such as condominiums, if they were closer to work and public transportation areas as there are people who want the traditional single-family home that comes with long commutes.

Those denser, affordable homes would help solve the housing crisis in Southern California that has as much as 70 percent of residents priced out of home ownership, Pisano said.

However, Ray Pearl, executive director of the local chapter of The Building Industry of Southern

California, said builders will respond to the market, which, he said, overwhelmingly favors traditional single-family homes.

"Urban infill is certainly part of the future," Pearl said, but "it will not meet the demand or housing needs in the state."

He said denser development has to be wanted in the area, adding that any new development in Ventura County is challenging for builders.

But, Pisano said, this was a vision created by citizens and developers as much as urban planners, and the market will show that people are ready for less traffic, more affordable homes and a better quality of life. It is that quality of life that the Compass Vision provides, he said.

On the Net:

<http://www.socalcompass.org>

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